

WORKERS WORLD

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Foreclosures epidemic rages as Gov't aids banks, not homeowners

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

On Aug. 20 the U.S. Treasury Department issued a report citing the failure of the federal Home Affordable Modification Program to alleviate foreclosures and keep people in their homes. The HAMP was instituted by the Obama administration with the stated purpose of helping 3 million to 4 million homeowners get loan modifications from their lenders that would allow them to keep their homes.

The foreclosure epidemic ravaging cities and states across the U.S. shows no end in sight, with no real relief available to the vast majority of workers, homeowners and renters. More than 2.3 million households have been forced out of their homes due to foreclosure and repossession by the banks and lenders since the economic crisis officially began in December 2007. A million more will likely be added to those ranks this year, with some economic forecasters predicting 1.5 million additional foreclosures in 2011.

But nearly half of the only 1.3 million homeowners who were accepted into the HAMP have not received permanent loan modifications and face or have gone through foreclosure.

According to the Treasury report, about 48 percent of those who had enrolled in the program since March 2009 — some 630,000 homeowners who tried to get their monthly mortgage payments lowered to 31 percent of their gross income — have been cut loose through the end of July. Only 32 percent of those who started the program have been able to get permanent loan modifications to save their homes. (Associated Press, Aug. 20)

In Michigan, one of the states deeply impacted by the racist subprime mortgage catastrophe and the ensuing record rate of foreclosures and evictions, the "Helping Hardest Hit Homeowners" program started on July 12 with the stated goal of keeping unemployed homeowners out of foreclosure.

New foreclosures in the state are skyrocketing as layoffs, plant closings and unemployment soar. The city of Detroit has been particularly devastated.

The program was supposed to utilize \$154.5 million in federal funds from the U.S. departments of Treasury and Housing and Urban Development to pay up to half of a home mortgage, up to \$750 per month for one year, for laid-off workers who are drawing unemployment benefits. On Aug. 13 it was announced the state would receive an additional \$128 million for the program.

Untold thousands in Michigan, like millions of workers around the country, have exhausted their unemployment benefits and/or are no

Continued on page 6



WOMEN UNITE

At int'l anti-imperialist conference

11



WW PHOTOS: LEILANI DOWELL

CLASS STRUGGLE

Why Democrats fear it 4

FREE AHLAM MOHSEN

Pie and repression 7

UAW'S NEW LEADERS

Justice or concessions? 7

DETROIT'S CRISIS

How to fight back 6

STOP ANTI-MUSLIM BIGOTRY

9/11 initiative 3

Free Troy Davis!

Editorial 10

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Gas Stock galvanizes anti-fracking activists

By **Betsey Piette**
Dallas, Pa.

An effort to educate people on the dangers of rapidly expanding drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale region brought more than 500 people to the Luzerne County Fairgrounds in northeastern Pennsylvania on Aug. 22. The Gas Stock Festival offered an all-day event with bands, information tables, vendors and a “soap box” section for speakers.

This part of Pennsylvania is becoming the epicenter for expansion of natural gas drilling. Nearby Dimock in Susquehanna County is considered “ground zero.”

Organizers expressed hope that the event would also help galvanize opponents of the industry. Activists from as far away as Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and upstate New York participated, “making the concert the first step in the formation of a statewide coalition,” said organizer Roxanne Pauline.

Pauline’s group, Northeast Pennsylvania Citizens in Action, initiated the event. She told Workers World: “The problems people are experiencing from hydraulic fracking are real, not made up. Dimock is the worst of it, the poster child for when things go wrong, but drilling is impacting people in rural areas in lots of ways. When people in the cities have to pay \$10 for a bottle of water, they might get more concerned.”

Dimock made national news last November when 15 residents filed suit against Houston-based Cabot Oil and Gas, charging that toxic chemical spills and methane gas from the industry’s frack wells contaminated their drinking water and sickened residents. Some plaintiffs had their water wells explode from methane gas build-up.

Dimock activists Julie Sautner and Craig Sautner brought a large jug containing yellowish-brown contaminated water from their well to the festival. Craig Sautner told Workers World about their ongoing struggle to secure a reliable source of water. They can’t drill another well but live too far to use municipal water lines.

The Sautners continue to experience health problems, including skin rashes, from the filtered water they use for showers and airborne fracking chemicals. “Several news people who came to our place to do interviews all got sick just being here a short time,” Sautner said. “Some got rashes from just being there an hour. A neighbor down the road with a gas pad less than 400 feet from his house gets constant nose bleeds.”

While their case is in litigation, the devastating impact of this disaster continues to affect their lives. “Our only son plans to leave home to get away from the problem. Our grandchildren can’t come to visit us,” Julie Sautner lamented. “We’ve been lied to, pushed around. Enough is enough. We need to push back.”

Her husband continued, “I get job offers but have to put them on hold because I can’t sell a house with dirty water. One day has turned into a week, turned into a month, turned into years. What does it take to get someone to listen to us?”

Yvonne Lucia, co-chair of New York Residents Against Drilling in the Binghamton, N.Y., area, lives five miles



WW PHOTO: BERTA JOUBERT-CECI
Julie Sautner and Craig Sautner displaying contaminated water. Betsey Piette, right.

from the Pennsylvania border where test wells are being drilled. Lucia told WW, “I’m outraged about the corporate takeover of our lives. All the money that’s being used to subsidize these companies could have gone to green technologies.

“What’s driving this is that we live in an economically depressed area. A lot of industry here before is gone. We may see a huge influx of big money initially from fracking, but when it vanishes in a few years, we’re back to where we

started with no sustainable economy.”

Her anti-corporate sentiments were echoed by Jack Ossomt from the Finger Lakes region in New York, where organizers quashed efforts to put in connecting lines to the 182-mile-long Millennium Pipeline, designed to carry gas from frack wells along the state’s southern tier.

“We saw the writing on the wall that it would lead to the expansion of drilling in this area, where extensive exploration is already going on. In several townships over 30 percent of the land is leased already, right near lakes from which hundreds of thousands of people draw drinking water,” Ossomt said.

“An economic study out of Cornell University estimates that over the next 10 years \$392 billion of our area’s economy will come from tourism, agriculture and affiliated industries, with only \$22 billion from the gas industry. This industry is not a boom for our communities, plus they shove off problems on local people to take care of that far exceed the ability of those communities.

“The root cause of all this is the power of corporations to be seen as a person. They go into court as a super person with tremendous financial resources to pay attorneys to take away our rights,” Ossomt concluded.

Pennsylvania State Rep. Phyllis Mundy from the 120th District called for a statewide moratorium against further drilling. Mundy voiced opposition to the gas industry’s push for enactment of a “pooling” law that would force Pennsylvania property owners to sell their below-ground natural gas rights for drilling if their neighbors were doing the same.

Mundy and other speakers also denounced the industry’s push for state officials to consider drilling to be “a use by right” in all zoning districts. This effort would undermine local bans on drilling or zoning restrictions enacted or being proposed in Pittsburgh and other cities.

Shireen Parsons with the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, which has helped many municipalities draft local anti-fracking ordinances, warned against relying on legislators to curtail the industry.

In just the past year, three of Gov. Ed Rendell’s top staff left state jobs to work in governmental relations jobs for the gas industry. Earlier in August, two consulting firms owned by former governor Tom Ridge signed contracts to serve as strategic advisors to the Marcellus Shale Coalition. Two of Ridge’s former aides are also involved in lobbying on behalf of the industry.

Parsons urged those gathered to begin mobilizing mass opposition to the natural gas industry’s invasion of their communities. □

WORKERS WORLD
this week...

★ **In the U.S.**

Gov’t aids banks, not homeowners	1
Gas Stock galvanizes anti-fracking activists	2
Progressives to confront racist gathering Sept. 11	3
Palestinian activist in Houston remembered	3
Class struggle and two-party system.....	4
NY unions refuse to endorse Dems	4
On the picket line	4
Youth unemployment hits record high.....	5
Workers, oppressed need anti-capitalist program	6
Free Ahlam Mohsen!	7
Racism, concessions and the future of the UAW	7
Mumia Abu-Jamal on Marilyn Buck	10
OLOC denounces SB 1070, violence against women.....	10
Old Lesbian group fights racism, ageism	11

★ **Around the world**

Bangladesh workers, students fight back	8
U.S. occupation increases violence against Afghan women..	8
U.S. never helped Saudi women	8
Iraq occupation continues despite phony withdrawal	9
Pentagon ‘dirty tricks’ can’t close can of worms	9
French gov’t attacks immigrants.....	10
Montreal: Women activists unite to fight imperialism.....	11

★ **Editorials**

Free Troy Davis!.....	10
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★ **Noticias En Español**

Inundaciones en Pakistán	12
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Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
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Closing date: Aug. 24, 2010
Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker
Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe, Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Gloria Rubac
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Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Michael Martínez, Carlos Vargas
Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator
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National Office
55 W. 17 St.
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617-522-6626
Fax 617-983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313-459-0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
331 W. Main St., Ste. 408
Durham, NC 27701
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713-503-2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 W Pico Blvd.
Suite # 207
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323-515-5870

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org
Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego
CA 92163
619-692-0355

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco
CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

Progressives to mobilize Sept. 11 to confront racist gathering

By John Catalinotto
New York

Activists here and around the country have begun mobilizing to stop cold those who promote racism and hatred of Muslims. They plan to confront a vicious demonstration and rally scheduled for the World Trade Center site on Sept. 11. A rally and counterprotest near the WTC site on Aug. 22 showed that the confrontation is gaining momentum.

On one side are the U.S.'s most reactionary public characters, like Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Liz Cheney with the Tea Party and also more obscure fascist-like elements. They drum up anti-Muslim hatred along with a phony populism. Their target is a proposed Islamic community center a few blocks from the WTC site.

They are well-financed and have backing from reactionary gutter media like Fox News, as well as general corporate media attention to their racist offensive.

These racists' short-term electoral goal is to defeat the Democratic Party in the upcoming congressional elections and debilitate the Barack Obama administration.

Their long-term aim, however, is to sow division in the working class by spreading race hatred and hatred of foreigners, specifically of people from Muslim countries. If allowed to take hold, such division would weaken the workers' struggle. Workers need anti-racist solidarity to wage their essential fight for jobs, education, health care and other social benefits.

Fortunately, forces are mobilizing to confront the right-wingers' fascist-like rally.

Stop the racist mobilization, fight for jobs

Many organizations and individuals have joined a call issued by the International Action Center to confront the anti-Muslim offensive. The call is for a New York City rally on Saturday, Sept. 11, at Church Street and Park Place at 2 p.m., followed by a march to the WTC site to confront the racists. Feeder marches are being organized.

The IAC call went out by e-mail at noon on Aug. 20 with 43 names attached, including community, labor, anti-war and anti-racist voices. According to IAC co-coordinator Sara Flounders, within hours hundreds of organizations and individuals had signed on their support. The IAC is hosting a planning meeting on Aug. 25 at its New York office for those wanting to help successfully confront the racists. (See iacenter.org to sign on)

The IAC raised the following slogans in an e-mail:

- Unity not racism!
- Unity not anti-immigrant bigotry!
- Unity not Islamophobia!

"It is not Muslim people who are robbing our jobs and homes and closing schools and hospitals. It is the banks, corporations and the Pentagon. Don't let the memory of 9/11 be misused again to justify new wars against people in Muslim countries. Let's unite against racism

and bigotry and fight together for JOBS, health care, to save our schools and services and build human solidarity and respect," read the IAC e-mail Aug. 23.

This orientation is straightforward: At a time of capitalist economic crisis, it is vitally important for working people to stay unified. It is also important not to be diverted from the essential struggle for jobs and benefits. To do this, working and unemployed people must fight all forms of racism and bigotry that are used to divide the working class and prevent it from waging a successful defense of its rights.

How to stop rightists' effort

The rightists see the planned construction of an Islamic Center — an activity Washington has supported in order to repair what's left of the U.S.'s reputation among the world's billion Muslims — as an act they can exploit for reactionary domestic political gain.

They have invited their big guns to speak: former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, an enemy of Latin American peoples and conspirator against the governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia; former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who tried to steal Social Security from the U.S. workers; and internationally, the racist Dutch parliamentarian and consummate anti-Islamist Geert Wilders.

These demagogues will tell and spread any lie for their reactionary ends. They encourage the false beliefs, for example,

that President Barack Obama is Muslim or was born outside the U.S., searching to manipulate racism against the first African-American president. Another invited speaker, Andrew Breitbart, made and spread the video distorting Shirley Sherrod's comments that got her fired this summer. Sherrod was the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural development director for Georgia. (See *Workers World*, July 28.)

They managed to get New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority to allow hate-mongering ads against the Islamic Center on New York City buses. This capitulation shows the unwillingness of the current political and ruling-class establishment to confront the Tea Party rightists head-on.

The Democratic Party establishment and some others have a more sophisticated approach to the Muslim world. They want to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq and especially to control the oil of the Middle East. But they want a situation where they can make diplomatic agreements with the governments and ruling circles of the Muslim-majority countries and not appear to be at war with all Muslims worldwide.

The imam of the proposed Islamic Center, Feisal Abdul Rauf, even goes on diplomatic speaking tours defending U.S. foreign policy, sponsored by the State Department. This doesn't stop those opposing the center from implying he is aligned

Continued on page 5

Palestinian activist remembered in Houston

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

The Palestinian community here has lost a beloved, generous, courageous and dedicated activist and leader. Abu Obeida Omran was killed during an attempted robbery on Aug. 13. Four memorials have been held at the Arab American Cultural Center and hundreds attended his funeral at El Farouk Mosque on Aug. 16 — including Arabs, Muslims, African Americans, Latinos/as, Asians and whites.

During the burial a woman said in Spanish that she and her family lived near one of Obeida's stores. "When [my boys] got older, he encouraged them to attend college and even hired them in his store to help them pay tuition. He allowed them to work around their college schedule. We are so sad and will miss his kindness and his smile," she said.

Abu Obeida was a leader of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition. He was a member of their national coordinating committee and responsible for the organization's external affairs. He was working to develop chapters in four other cities in Texas. For almost two decades, there was rarely an event for the Palestinian people in Houston that Abu Obeida did not help organize or attend.

In the past year many Palestinian refugees arrived in Houston from Iraq. Abu Obeida helped physically and financially with their resettlement, finding clothing and furniture, housing, jobs and community for them. "He helped the refugees like crazy," said Sahar Abusada, chair of Palestinians for Peace and Democracy, "because he said he knows how they feel." He also sponsored students from Palestine to study in the U.S.

Abu Obeida was from the village of Burin, near Nablus on the West Bank. He came to the U.S. in 1990, struggling as most immigrants do. He was a parking lot attendant and worked at pumping gas. Eventually, he became a successful small business owner. He had just opened the store where he was killed two months earlier. He had two small sons and a daughter; his spouse is expecting their fourth child.

Massoud Nayeri, his friend and partner in Al-Awda, said: "Abu always wanted to give back to the community. I was helping him with collecting school supplies for the children in the communities where he had his stores."

Abu Obeida helped organize the 2009 Viva Palestina convoy to Gaza, raising more than \$150,000. Former British Member of Parliament George Galloway sent condolences, which read in part: "The first time I saw this gentle giant was through the Viva Palestina USA convoy. ... He had thrown his heart and soul into the convoy and entered Gaza wearing his Stetson, his Texan cowboy boots and with imitation cow horns on his vehicle. He was wearing his trademark red keffiyah — he was a left-wing Palestinian first and last — and was received as a hero by the Gazans. ... He was a simply unforgettable character. In 35 years of working in the Palestinian cause I have never come across anyone quite like him. He seemed absolutely unstoppable, a force of nature, a dynamo."

Bob Carter, a leader of Justice for Palestinians, said: "I knew Abu as a man of few words who was truly dedicated to the Palestinian cause. In the background, he was the prime sponsor of countless actions. He was one of the kindest and most giving persons I have ever known. He left



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Abu Obeida Omran, right, holds banner reading: "Brothers and sisters of Haiti, Palestinian people feel your pain."

a marvelous example for all to follow. I miss him greatly."

"We will mourn Abu Obeida for a long time, but I vow to stay the course of the struggle he and I joined 20 years ago. I have no choice but to keep the torch up high till a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East is achieved; until Palestinians finally live in their own independent country with Jerusalem as its capital, and Palestinian refugees have finally returned to their homes and land as per U.N. Resolution 194," said Kamal Khalil, chair of the Houston Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine.

Abu Obeida's death is a loss to all Houstonians, said Ester King, a veteran of the U.S. civil rights movement and a community activist. King, a volunteer for the Black Heritage Society, said he met Omran more than a year ago as the society reached out to foreign-born owners of stores in African-American neighbor-

hoods. Omran donated money to preserve African-American memorabilia, one of the society's projects. "Sometimes business people are so focused on their own bottom lines that they don't leave a lot of room for social justice," King said. "That was not him."

At Houston's 2010 Martin Luther King parade, Obeida organized the float of the Houston Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine. Understanding that the Haitian community was then reeling from earthquakes, he brought the banner that read, "Brothers and sisters of Haiti, Palestinians feel your pain."

Iranian activist Zhaleh Sahand said: "He was instrumental in the struggle and inspirational. Always modest in his immense generosity, Abu put his money and efforts where his mouth was. He was a solid body of peace and tranquility ... but militant in his spirit ... determined to bring those in need to the shore of survival." □

What really should frighten Robert Gibbs

Class struggle and two-party system

By David Sole

When White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs blasted the “left wing” of the Democratic Party on Aug. 10 during an interview with The Hill it kicked up quite a storm. He focused on what he called the “professional left” commentators who he denounced as seeking “Canadian health care” and to “eliminate the Pentagon.” (thehill.com)

Gibbs, while not backing down from his attack, admitted it was “born out of frustration.” Some in the press called him “irascible.” Interviewed on MSNBC on Aug. 11, Democratic Rep. Alan Grayson of Florida called Gibbs “Bozo the Spokesman.” Yet not one of the articles on Gibbs’ outburst got to the heart of the matter. The Democratic Party is made up of two classes. Its base is made up of the unions, so-called “minorities” and the poor — the working class. But the leadership is firmly in the hands of the banks and corporations — the ruling capitalist class.

As the economy deteriorates a conflict is rising between these two classes. In the long run this conflict will break apart the Democratic Party. Gibbs is not just anybody. He has been working with President Barack Obama since 2004. As White House press spokesperson he is in the inner circle of Democratic Party discussion.

Clearly the Obama administration is feeling the heat for its failure to deliver on its promises to end the wars. Despite claims to be ending combat operations in Iraq, that country still has no functioning government and military attacks by the resistance continue. And more U.S. troops are streaming into Afghanistan as U.S. casualties rise and much-touted counter-insurgency operations grind to a halt.

Economic crisis and two-party system

Of greater threat to the administration is the continuing economic crisis inside the U.S. Despite a short upturn in profits for the banks and bosses, the jobless crisis keeps crushing the working class population. Home foreclosures are at record levels. The so-called health care reform bill is more and more being seen as mainly a

giveaway to the pharmaceutical industry and the health-care-for-profit industry.

That Gibbs, speaking for Obama and the Democratic Wall Street bunch, is feeling snappish only reflects how far out of touch they are with the tens of millions of suffering working-class families. They cannot understand why the few crumbs they have thrown to the masses are not satisfying those ungrateful wretches.

But Gibbs wasn’t too worried. He wouldn’t apologize and when asked at a White House press briefing, said he was certain that the “liberals” would still vote Democratic. While he didn’t say it directly, he believes they have nowhere else to go.

It is true that the U.S. is seen as a two-party system. Both the Democrats and Republicans raise and spend hundreds of millions of dollars for their major campaigns. The mass media is also so wedded to the capitalist system that they rarely cover progressive third-party challengers. But history has shown that even this two-party monopoly is vulnerable in periods of great economic and social crisis.

The “irrepressible conflict” between the slave-owning South and the emerging capitalist North erupted over and over again from the early 1800s onward. The Whig Party represented the northern capitalists and farmers. It was firmly established against the Democratic Party, dominated by the slave-owners. The Whigs had their own “left wing,” such as the Massachusetts Whigs led by Charles Sumner, who were strong against slavery. But the Whig Party as a whole contained them and kept a moderate, compromising policy toward slavery in the South. Ultimately the Whig Party couldn’t contain the growing class conflict.

In 1854 the Republican Party was born with the influx of many different currents — abolitionists, free-soilers, temperance activists, Whig party breakaway elements and others. Six years later the Republicans took the White House. Of course the election itself could not end the class struggle. It was only an indication of the mood of the masses. The election precipitated the Civil War, which solved, through blood and thunder, the class issue of

whether slave owners or capitalists would run the country. The formerly powerful Whig Party disappeared.

Another third-party movement that almost derailed the two-party system in the U.S. was the Peoples Party (Populists) of the 1890s. This party was based on the anger of small business owners and small farmers, sometimes in alliance with industrial workers, against the growth and oppressive hand of the big banks, the monopoly corporations and especially the railroads.

The Peoples Party movement was hindered by its general failure to address racism. It derailed completely when it gave up its independence and endorsed the Democratic Party candidacy of William Jennings Bryan in the election of 1896. Ultimately it was doomed since it was based on the shrinking influence of the small business/farmer class, which became less and less important in the economy.

Today any challenge to capitalism must be led by the working class including the oppressed nations — African American, Latino/a, Native and others within the U.S. The class conflict between the two classes cannot be papered over forever. It was only the emergence of the U.S. as the chief imperialist world exploiter after World War II that allowed the U.S. capitalists to hand enough crumbs out to the industrial unions and others to raise the average standard of living for several decades inside this country. This bought the bosses class peace at home and depoliticized the working class to a great extent for decades to come.

The average standard of living has been declining steadily since 1972 in the U.S. This has been an uneven development, with the poorest, non-unionized workers, welfare recipients and unemployed losing more at first. Step by step the capitalists have widened the downward pressure.

Today we see the decline of the once great unions in auto, steel, rubber, etc. Where jobs remain (and millions of these jobs have been lost to outsourcing and off-shoring) the wages are often half of what they were before. With the current economic crisis the drive to reduce the standard of living of the working class is accelerating.

Broadening fight vs. capitalism

This is the problem the Democratic Party big shots are griping about when they attack their left wing. It is a problem they cannot fix. It is inherent in the capitalist system itself.

Most union leaders and many civil rights activists are still loyal to the Democratic Party. They have no intention to pull out, especially since most of them have no knowledge of Marxism or class political analysis. But the pressure from their membership and constituencies is growing and they feel they must respond. What they intend, and what they unleash, may be very different things.

A most significant development recently arose when the veteran civil rights leader, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, got together with the new United Auto Workers international union President Bob King to announce the Aug. 28 march for “Jobs, Justice and Peace” in Detroit.

The planning documents of the UAW leadership call for ending the Iraq and Af-

ON THE

Support grows for Mott’s strikers

On Aug. 18 Grammy winner Steve Earle vowed to stop drinking diet Dr. Pepper — he’s been drinking it since he was 10 — until the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group offers 305 Mott’s applesauce workers a fair contract. (www.ufcw.blogspot.com)

The workers, represented by Local 220 of the Department Store union, a division of the Food and Commercial Workers union (RWDSU-UFCW), have been on strike in upstate New York for more than 100 days after they turned down a horrendous contract. DPS wanted the highly productive workers to take a \$1.50 an hour pay cut and a pension freeze — even though Mott’s is highly profitable and the DPS stockholders’ dividend increased by 67 percent in May.

The same day that Earle encouraged people to join his DPS boycott, the New York Times ran a long article on the strike, noting “its unusual nature: a highly profitable company ... taking the rare and bold step of demanding large-scale concessions.” (Aug. 17) Local 220 President Mike LeBerth told the Times: “Corporate America is making tons of money. ... So why do they want to drive down our wages and hurt our community? This whole economy is driven by consumer spending, so how are we supposed to keep the economy going when they take away money from the people who are doing the spending?”

Exactly. That’s why all working and oppressed people need to rally to defend the proud, righteous Mott’s workers as they fight a critical battle that must be won. To sign a petition supporting the strikers, visit www.ufcw.ca.

ghanistan wars and using the money for needed social services at home. They also call for a moratorium on foreclosures, a demand initiated and fought for in Detroit over the past three years by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. The UAW, along with other Michigan unions, is putting significant effort and resources into this initiative. They are also drawing in activist-oriented community organizations.

While the top leaders of this effort mainly see it as a way to register more Democratic Party voters and to influence the November elections, Rev. Jackson stated that his goal is also to push forward an “urban agenda” for jobs, against foreclosures, to end the wars, etc., that the masses of unemployed, students and workers can begin to fight for.

In addition to the Detroit march the NAACP, in league with the AFL-CIO national leadership and others, has called for a mass march in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 2.

These are the things that should be worrying Gibbs, Obama and Wall Street. For the first time in a long time, powerful unions are making an alliance with broad-based community groups with a program of demands for the working class.

It won’t be in the electoral arena that the class struggle is mainly fought, but in the streets and in the workplaces. The tensions inside the Democratic Party are only a weak reflection of real, powerful and inevitable struggles that cannot and will not be repressed for long.

Sole is a long-time union activist and former president of UAW 2334 in Detroit. He is a leader of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice.

NY unions refuse to endorse Dems

By a NYSUT delegate

The Daily News, in an Aug. 17 editorial, called it a surprise. New York State United Teachers, which represents 600,000 teachers, education workers and retirees, refused to endorse Andrew Cuomo, the Democratic candidate for governor, and about 30 Democratic candidates for the state Senate and Assembly.

The editorial failed to mention that the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union’s Civil Service Employees Association, which represents 400,000 workers also throughout New York, likewise failed to endorse.

According to a NYSUT leadership briefing, “President [Richard] Iannuzzi ... cited the four compelling reasons why NYSUT’s Board of Directors voted last week not to endorse Cuomo at this time:

his positions on property tax caps and a state Constitutional Convention, his plan to ‘Clean up Albany,’ and the threat of a Tier VI pension level.”

According to the Professional Staff Congress website, First Vice President Steve London explained why Cuomo found so little support among NYSUT delegates: “He’s attacked public employees, ruled out a more progressive income tax, favored a hard cap on property taxes, and he’s come out in favor of privatizing [City University of New York] and [State University of New York] funding.” The PSC, which represents about 20,000 faculty and staff at the CUNY, is an affiliate of NYSUT.

It’s not clear if this “unendorsement” represents a significant trend away from labor’s traditional embrace of the Democratic Party or is just a blip. □

PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Calif. nurses act on Women’s Equality Day

The California Nurses Association/National Nurses United has called for a rally and march in the state capital of Sacramento on Aug. 26 — the 90th anniversary of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote, known as Women’s Equality Day — “to protest Meg Whitman’s bid to buy the governorship.”

Billionaire Whitman, a conservative Republican, has said she will cut the state payroll by 40,000 jobs, radically reduce public employee pensions, deregulate industry and cut the social safety net. The protest is endorsed by more than a dozen major labor groups, including the California Labor Federation.

Given that nurses were in the forefront of the suffrage movement, as they fought for public health services for all and improved workplace and economic standards for nurses, it’s only fitting that they’re in the forefront of the same struggles today! (blog.afcio.org, Aug. 13)

Steelworkers defend locked-out nuclear workers

More than 3,000 members of the Steelworkers union and their families converged on Metropolis, Ill., from four surrounding states on Aug. 7 to defend the jobs of more than 225 nuclear fuel workers who were locked out by Honeywell Corp. on June 28.

Steelworkers Local 7-669 members had agreed to work and keep negotiating after their contract expired, but Honeywell slammed the door in their faces after the local turned down a contract that would have cut 45 jobs, seniority rights, overtime pay, pensions and retiree benefits.

District 7 Director Jim Robinson stated that Honeywell’s attempt to break the local is “part of a larger fight going on in this country.” Calling the struggle an “old fight,” Robinson noted, “Corporate greed is in the Bible. When the pharaoh was too greedy to pay the Israelites, they organized and walked out.” (blog.afcio.org, Aug. 12)

Casino dealers ratify historic contract

For the first time in Atlantic City, casino dealers began working under a union contract on Aug. 19. The five-year contract, negotiated by the Technical, Office and Professional Department of the United Auto Workers, includes an 18 percent pay raise for more than 700 dealers at the Tropicana Casino and Resort.

Though dealers at Ceasars, Trump Plaza and Bally’s also voted to form unions in 2007, the casino operators have refused to bargain or stalled negotiations. The UAW represents more than 8,800 gaming employees in five states. (uaw.org)

Calif. state workers ratify contracts

Despite threats of draconian cutbacks, two groups of state workers in California ratified contracts the week of Aug. 9 — the more than 11,000 members of Operating Engineers State Unit 12 and 6,500 postdoctoral researchers at the University of California. The AFL-CIO blog noted that the latter contract “could potentially impact researchers at college campuses across the country who are fighting for respect and dignity.” (Aug. 17)

Rally in defense of Bangladesh labor leaders

Trade union and labor activists from the AFL-CIO, the International Labor Rights Forum and United Students Against Sweatshops, among others, picketed the Embassy of Bangladesh on Aug. 19 in Washington, D.C., to protest the imprisonment of two leaders of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity. The arrests followed recent BCWS protests demanding a raise in the minimum wage in the ready-made garment industry. “At 20 cents per hour, garment workers’ wages are by far the lowest of any major apparel-producing country. Often workers are not even paid. They also face hazardous working conditions, and several lost their lives recently in major factory fires,” noted the AFL-CIO blog. (Aug. 19) □

No end in sight

Youth unemployment hits record high

By Scott Williams

According to the Aug. 11 “Global Employment Trends for Youth 2010” report by the International Labor Organization, a U.N. agency, more than 82 million young people aged 16-25, or 13 percent of 620 million young workers across the world, are unemployed.

Even this record high number evades the reality of global mass unemployment, underemployment and poverty faced by young workers. They generally work in low-wage jobs with no benefits or job security and live in constant desperation and uncertainty. One-quarter of all employed youth — or 152 million — remain in extreme poverty, living in households making less than \$1.25 per day.

More than half of young people in the U.S., ages 16-24, do not have jobs. According to a study by the AFL-CIO, one in three young workers lives with their parents. About a third are uninsured and a third cannot pay their bills. Seven in 10 do not have enough money to cover two months of living expenses.

Youth from oppressed communities are being hit the hardest by the capitalist crisis. Black youth face unemployment rates above 50 percent. National Public Radio’s program “All Things Considered” reports that fewer than 14 in 100 young Black men have jobs. Latino/a youth face similarly high rates of unemployment.

Already given fewer chances to get a job, even with no benefits, youth from oppressed communities, including immigrants, face higher unemployment and more competition for low-wage jobs. They have been

impacted by the loss of millions of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. in the past decade, as well as the current recession. They are subjected to racist discrimination and are often the last hired and first fired if they are hired at all.

The current large pool of unemployed workers can be tapped to replace workers who attempt to organize against the economic inequality of capitalism.

The capitalist class and the state increasingly criminalize and imprison youth of color, instead of providing living-wage jobs and benefits.

While young people see fewer job opportunities, the U.S. military sees recruitment potential. Since the economic crisis began, military recruiters, who falsely promise funding for college, are finding it easier to recruit young people who can’t find jobs or afford to attend college. Recruitment levels are at their highest since before 2003, especially among working-class youth, including men and women from oppressed communities.

While the growth of low-wage jobs has been traditionally high among women workers, increased job competition has hurt women workers. Young women face a global unemployment rate of 13.2 percent, as opposed to the rate of 12.9 percent for young men, which is very high, too.

Lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer youth face increasing uncertainty, as well as few protections from discrimination and bigotry. With the lack of rights at work, as well as the lack of high-paying union jobs that offer job security and protections for them and all workers, this precariousness and inequality will only continue.

The attacks on public education

are increasing. State and local governments are cutting funds for education at all levels. There is more of a push to train young workers for a world of low-wage jobs, instead of providing higher education.

Local governments are shutting down high schools, especially those which are attended mostly by students of color. This is a result of the “Race to the Top,” the Obama administration’s answer to the tremendously unpopular Bush administration policy of “No Child Left Behind.”

Tuition is skyrocketing at public and private universities, such as the 32 percent hike at the University of California system last year. Meanwhile, class sizes are getting bigger. There are fewer living wage jobs to help students pay off their mountain of debt.

Youth need jobs. They need to organize to get them. On Oct. 2, young people will be fighting for jobs in a Youth and Students Contingent at the One Nation March in Washington, D.C. On Oct. 7, youth worldwide will unite to defend their right to an education. These are important mobilizations, as youth and all workers must continue to build a fightback movement.

Youth have always been key to building popular struggles, whether for Black liberation, LGBTQ rights, opposing war or in student movements. With their energy, excitement and passion youth must continue to fight for a better world, one that enshrines their rights to an education, a job or an income, and equality for all people.

Scott Williams is a member of Raleigh Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

Sept.11 action to confront racist gathering

Continued from page 3

with “Islamic terrorists.”

Even though the racist Tea Party approach sabotages U.S. diplomacy, this more sophisticated wing of the establishment refuses to take on the racists. They too refuse to build a true solidarity between the U.S. population and those of majority Muslim countries because that is a solidarity

that could undermine the Pentagon’s murderous wars of occupation.

Instead, they propose compromise solutions, like building the center further away from the WTC site.

An honest people’s struggle, such as proposed by the IAC, is needed to build real solidarity. As the IAC statement made clear:

“In New York City the ugly demonstration of racism and bigotry

against Muslims on Sept. 11 at the World Trade Center must be countered with a mass show of solidarity and unity. We call on all working people, youth, students, immigrants, trade unionists, community and human rights activists — all those opposed to racism and bigotry — to stand on that day in defense of our Muslim sisters and brothers.”

Email: jcat@workers.org

Workers, Immigrants, Unemployed, Youth, Students:

Capitalism is Killing the People & the Planet

If you are interested in abolishing a profit-hungry system that is:
● throwing people out of work and their homes ● closing schools and hospitals ● denying universal health care ● making war ● bailing out banks ● jailing the poor & the youth ● racial profiling Black people, Latinos/as, immigrants and all people of color ● destroying the environment with global warming & oil spills

Workers World Party & Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), from coast to coast are actively organizing in the struggles for jobs, education, housing, health care; organizing to stand up against racism; to say no worker is illegal in Arizona and elsewhere; and for women’s and lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer equality. We are organizing to stop imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and oppose occupation from Haiti to Palestine.

WWP & FIST are Fighting for Socialism– a world without oppression, exploitation, poverty and war — where all the wealth of society belongs to the people and is used to meet human need not corporate greed.

Don’t wait until the Nov. conference. Workers World holds weekly meetings and discussions in addition to organizing. If you are interested call us at 212-627-2994, email wwp@workers.org and go to workersworld.net for updates on the Nov. 12-14 conference.

Then it’s time to stand up, unite and fight back for a socialist future!



Workers World Party
REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Western	LOS ANGELES	Sept. 4
So. California Library 6120 S. Vermont Ave. Registration opens at 9 a.m. Pre-register at www.workersworld.net Call: 323-515-5870 e-mail: westcoastconference@workers.org		
Midwest	CHICAGO	Sept. 18
UE Headquarters, Main Hall 37 So. Ashland Ave.		
Southern	DURHAM, N.C.	Oct. 23
Save the date! WWP NATIONAL CONFERENCE NOV • 12 ~ 14 • NYC		

Workers, oppressed need anti-capitalist program

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Detroit

The coming together of the United Auto Workers and the Rainbow/Push Coalition for the Aug. 28 “March for Jobs, Justice and Peace” in Detroit represents the potential for a re-emergence of the African-American and labor alliance that proved critical from the 1930s through the 1960s in movements winning significant concessions and social advances for workers’ and civil rights.

Both the Flint sit-down strike at General Motors in 1937 and the campaign to win recognition for the UAW at Ford in 1941 were pivotal in building a viable trade union movement in the United States. Despite the impact of the Cold War and the anti-communist hysteria starting in the late 1940s through the early 1970s, African Americans and their progressive allies were able to fight racism and sexism within industry as well as inside the unions themselves.

With the large-scale restructuring of capitalism in the U.S. and around the world starting in the 1970s and extending to the present period, both the labor movement and the African-American struggle have faced formidable challenges in efforts to reorient and regroup their fighting forces.

The ruling class has placed the workers and the oppressed into a defensive posture wherein the recognized leadership of the labor unions and civil rights organizations frequently advance demands based upon the political terms set by the bosses and the elected officials.

But accepting the so-called permanency of capitalism and imperialism, as the ruling class would have us believe, and the class structures that have evolved under these exploitative systems, has not resulted in any real gains for the work-

ing class and the oppressed. The opposite has been the case, where the masses have been further impoverished and marginalized in terms of decision-making and administrative authority over the direction of the national economy.

The current economic crisis thus requires a more militant approach that places the concerns and interests of the majority of the people at the forefront of any political program aimed at reversing the loss of jobs, wages and social benefits won through the valiant struggles that have been waged since the 1930s.

Such a political posture must be based on an objective assessment of the present situation. Detroit provides a stark example of the current plight of the working class and peoples of color in the United States.

Detroit: Epicenter of crisis

Detroit, with an 81 percent African-American majority population, is considered the epicenter of the U.S. economic crisis with its high rates of unemployment, home foreclosures, lack of health care, poverty and police repression. These economic conditions must also be viewed within the context of the unresolved national question and its inseparability from the class struggle.

The actual unemployment rate in the city is approaching 50 percent, according to a Detroit News article from Dec. 16. This is despite the fact that the official rate is slightly less than 30 percent because those who are underemployed, discouraged or have returned to school are excluded.

The article states “The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that for the year that ended in September 2009, Michigan’s official unemployment rate was 12.6 percent. Using the broadest definition of unemployment, the state unemployment

rate was 20.9 percent, 66 percent higher than the official rate.” The article pointed out that “Since Detroit’s official rate for October 2009 was 27 percent, that broader rate pushes the city’s rate to as high as 44.8 percent.”

This high unemployment rate is reinforced by other conditions in the city. “For a variety of reasons — access to transportation, job availability and work skills — an estimated 48.5 percent of male Detroiters ages 20 to 64 didn’t have a job in 2008, according to census figures. For Michigan, it is 26.6 percent; for the United States, 21.7 percent.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics stated in a report issued Aug. 5: “The Detroit area’s largest supersector — trade, transportation, and utilities — posted the area’s largest employment loss, down 9,200 from June 2009 to June 2010, a 2.8 percent decrease. This decline continued the supersector’s unbroken stretch of job losses dating back to April 2001. Nationally, employment in trade, transportation, and utilities declined 0.6 percent from June a year ago.”

The high rates of foreclosures, lack of health care and the crisis in education facing Detroiters are directly linked to the lack of jobs with decent incomes and benefits.

Right to a job, home, utilities

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs fights for a halt to all home seizures, the throwing of people out of their apartments and flats, and the shutoff of essential services such as electricity, heating and water.

Although the state and municipal administrations have fiercely resisted the imposition of a moratorium, the coalition has been successful through mass actions and legal work in saving the homes of nu-

merous families and in preventing homelessness for several thousand people living in multiple-dwelling structures.

During the 1930s, the Unemployed Councils and other mass organizations put up blockades in front of people’s homes in order to stop evictions. If evictions took place they would mobilize the communities to put people back into their homes.

This same model has been implemented in Detroit in a few cases, but the large-scale application of this form of struggle would require a much broader and militant movement that instills into the consciousness of working people that their right to a home supersedes the laws which give banks and landlords authority to throw people into the streets.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition has picketed DTE Energy because of the termination of lights, heating and water services that resulted in the deaths of more than 12 people in Detroit over the last year. The coalition actively supported a lawsuit that forced the utility giant to restore electrical services at an apartment building in Highland Park during the summer of 2009.

Yet Gov. Jennifer Granholm, to whom a direct appeal was made last winter to impose a moratorium on utility shutoffs for the winter, and who still won’t implement a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, has refused to halt these practices that have caused the deaths of Detroiters and others in the state.

Massive school closings and downsizing of tens of thousands of educational employees are directly related to the financial crisis of capitalism. In Detroit approximately 80 percent of the state revenue earmarked for education is utilized to pay off massive corporate-imposed debts to the banks.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition calls for a halt to the payment of debt service to the banks and the utilization of these funds to rehire teachers, custodians, administrative employees and social workers as well as the reinstatement of sports, music and other programs that are essential in implementing quality education programs for youth.

Detroit has also witnessed a dramatic rise in police brutality and misconduct. Since there is no hope for the workers and oppressed under the current capitalist crisis, the state has stepped up its repressive apparatus in an effort to prevent people from effectively organizing a militant fightback movement.

This police repression was exemplified in the assassination by the FBI of Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah in October 2009 and the shooting death by Detroit police of 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones on May 16, both of which have gone unpunished by the state.

As the workers in Greece and South Africa have demonstrated through recent strikes and mass actions, the labor and civil rights organizations must take the position that they are not responsible for the economic crisis and therefore should not be obligated to pay for the failed policies of the bosses. The masses must act in their social and political interests by organizing independently of both ruling class parties.

The upholding of the property rights of the corporations has been universal among both Democratic and Republican politicians. Workers and the oppressed need their own political party that speaks directly to the interests of labor, people of color and all the oppressed.

The writer is editor of the Pan-African News Wire and a leader in the Moratorium NOW! Coalition.

Foreclosures epidemic rages as Gov’t aids banks, not homeowners

Continued from page 1

longer “counted” as unemployed because they have given up searching for jobs during this period of economic contraction for workers. So they don’t even qualify for the “Helping Hardest Hit” program, which was supposed to help only 17,000 unemployed homeowners in the state.

But for those unemployed workers who might qualify, the Michigan program has also proven to be a failure. Why? Because most banks and lenders have refused to participate. Not a single one of the major lenders has signed on to the program. Even Gov. Jennifer Granholm was recently forced to admit this.

Exposing gov’t complicity in foreclosures

Instead of using her executive authority, however, to place a moratorium or freeze on foreclosures or mandate the banks to participate in the program, Granholm is urging unemployed homeowners to “call their lenders.” It is a long-established fact that homeowners do not obtain mortgage relief by “calling their lenders.”

The Detroit-based Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs has been in the forefront of exposing the reasons why the

federal HAMP and Michigan’s “Helping Hardest Hit” programs have failed.

Coalition leader and anti-foreclosure attorney Jerry Goldberg first exposed the debacle of the federal government’s program in a Workers World article entitled “Millions more to lose homes: Gov’t continues to bail out bankers, not homeowners.” (Dec. 31, 2009)

Goldberg was heard Aug. 16 on WDET public radio slamming the banks and lenders and the federal government for their complicity in tossing people out of their homes. “There’s no stick involved,” said Goldberg. “Instead of saying we’re not going to allow foreclosures unless the banks participate in the programs, [the government] simply depends on the goodwill of the banks — the same banks that make money off foreclosures ... and the same banks that get subsidized with every foreclosure. ... At the root of this crisis is that there’s a bailout going on with virtually every foreclosure.”

Goldberg explained how a majority of mortgages in the U.S. are now owned or backed up to their inflated, pre-foreclosure value by the federal government entities of Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae and HUD.

“Already \$145 billion has been paid out by the taxpayers to the banks through

Freddie and Fannie to cover losses on bad loans. The total bill is anticipated to reach \$389 billion. This means that every foreclosure in essence constitutes a bailout to the banks, which are paid off for the full value of the inflated loan — a loan foisted on homeowners by the predatory and fraudulent practices of these same banks. The lenders are actually being rewarded for not modifying loans.” Goldberg told Workers World.

“The government, instead of helping homeowners keep their homes, carries out most evictions now, and then the home is sold at a minimum price; in Detroit, for example, homes are sold at about 10 percent of a loan’s value, with the taxpayers making up the difference. The federal and state governments have the authority, however, to put a halt or moratorium on foreclosures, to mandate that banks modify loans and allow people to reclaim their homes at real value and based on payments that they can afford.

“It will take a continued struggle to wrest a moratorium — which doesn’t cost a dime — from the politicians who represent banks instead of people.”

The writer is an activist with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. E-mail: khamel@workers.org.

Students jailed for anti-war protest

Free Ahlam Mohsen!

By Megan Spencer
East Lansing, Mich.

Ahlam Mohsen, a 22-year-old student at Michigan State University, was arrested Aug. 15 and charged with two felony counts after she threw a pie at Sen. Carl Levin as an anti-war protest. She is being held on a \$250,000 bond, requiring \$25,000 cash for her release.

The pie-throwing incident, which Levin originally laughed off in the media, occurred during a Mecosta County Democratic Party meeting at a restaurant in Big Rapids, Mich., about 200 miles northwest of Detroit.

During a question-and-answer period, anti-war activist Max Kantar read a statement charging Levin with war crimes and imperialist actions through his role as chair of the Armed Services Committee. Kantar's statement confronted Levin on the continued U.S. financial support of Israel, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. policy on Iran and the homeless population in Detroit. (statenews.com, Aug. 16)

As Kantar finished reading the statement, Mohsen threw an apple pie at the senator. She reportedly told the Big Rapids Pioneer newspaper that she wanted to "send a message that liberals and Democrats are just as implicated in the violence of war as the Republicans."

Shortly after the incident, Mohsen was arrested by police and taken to Mecosta County Jail, where she awaits arraignment on felony charges of assault and stalking. Kantar was arrested Aug. 18 for

his involvement in the incident and is also facing felony charges of stalking, but was released Aug. 20 on a \$10,000 bond. Mohsen's next court date is scheduled for Aug. 30.

Supporters of Mohsen gathered Aug. 20 at the McNamara Federal Building in Detroit for a press conference and demonstration sponsored by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice. A delegation went inside to meet with staff from Senator Levin's office to demand that Mohsen be released from jail immediately and that all charges against her be dropped.

Throughout the demonstration, supporters chanted, "Free Ahlam Mohsen — Drop the charges now!" and "Jail the war criminals!" among other slogans. They called Mohsen "a people's hero" and demanded her immediate freedom. The protest received widespread media coverage around Michigan, including Big Rapids, where Mohsen is incarcerated.

A "Support Ahlam Mohsen" page on Facebook was created soon after her arrest, drawing nearly 200 members in just several days. Mohsen, who is a vegan and of Yemeni origin, has reportedly been mistreated in jail by being called racial epithets and being refused food that meets her dietary needs.

MSU student and activist Mitch Goldsmith told Workers World, "I've known Ahlam for years and she is an empathetic, intelligent, amazing person who fights like hell to make this world a more compassionate place for all those who inhabit it.

Aug. 20 protesters demanded that charges against Mohsen be dropped.

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER



"Ahlam is involved in many social justice struggles, but I know that Palestine and the suffering of the Palestinian people are very close to her heart." Mohsen was recently jailed inside occupied Palestine by the Israeli authorities and deported back to the U.S. because of her solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle against the Zionist apartheid state.

The charges Mohsen faces indicate a significant and dangerous attack on free speech and the right of the people to protest injustices. It is clear that the state intends to use fear and intimidation to discourage people from holding elected officials accountable for their actions and inactions, particularly concerning war and state-sponsored violence inflicted upon innocent people on a global scale. This political repression is unacceptable and must be addressed.

Supporters are urgently requested to take action to help obtain freedom and justice for Ahlam Mohsen and Max Kantar:

- Contact Sen. Carl Levin's office and demand that he immediately call the Mecosta County Prosecutor's Office and

have all charges against Mohsen and Kantar dropped and in the meantime to reduce Mohsen's quarter-million-dollar bond so that she doesn't have to spend another night in jail. Phone Levin at 313-266-6020; fax 313-266-6948; or e-mail by going to <http://levin.senate.gov/contact/>.

- Call the Mecosta County Prosecutor's Office directly at 231-592-0141 and demand all charges be dropped immediately.
- Call the Mecosta County Jail at 231-592-0156 (24-hour line) and request that Mohsen be fed vegan food to meet her dietary requirements.
- Attend Mohsen's Aug. 30 court date at 1:30 p.m. at the Mecosta County Courthouse, 400 Elm Street, Big Rapids, Mich.
- Supporters can also write to Mohsen at Mecosta County Jail, Attn: Inmate Ahlam Mohsen, 225 South Stewart Street, Big Rapids, MI 49307.

Spencer is a student activist at Michigan State University.

Racism, concessions and the future of the UAW

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

In 1942 a struggle in Detroit erupted over who would occupy a new federal housing project named for Sojourner Truth. The complex was located in a predominantly white neighborhood, but the government's stated intention had been to make the units available to Black tenants. At that time public housing was still segregated.

When it appeared the government would renege and only rent to white residents, Black leaders of the United Auto Workers initiated the Sojourner Truth Citizens Committee. White leaders of the UAW and the Wayne County CIO joined the committee, which held daily pickets of City Hall, in solidarity.

The UAW publicly condemned the violence of Detroit police, who had attacked Black youths defending themselves against a racist, cross-burning vigilante attack. With the solidarity of the labor movement, Black Detroiters eventually beat the racists and moved into the housing project.

Labor-community solidarity against racism — of which that historic struggle was a stellar example — is urgently needed today in the Motor City. African-American unemployment in the metropolitan area is officially 20 percent. Victims of police brutality include a respected imam, Luqman Ameen Abdullah, and 7-year-old Aiyana Jones. At least 45 schools will be closed in this Black majority city over the next three years.

Unions are under attack as well. City workers and teachers are facing massive

job cuts. The UAW's ranks have been decimated, with General Motors having the highest number of jobs eliminated — 107,000, twice the number of current UAW GM employees — since the recession "officially" began in December 2007.

Tens of thousands more have lost their jobs or taken buyouts at Chrysler and Ford. The few thousand workers newly hired in auto are working for half the pay of their higher-seniority counterparts.

The Aug. 28 march in downtown Detroit for "jobs, justice and peace" initiated by the Rev. Jesse Jackson and UAW President Bob King could not come at a better time.

The march coincides with the anniversary of the 1963 march on Washington for "jobs, peace and freedom" where Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. An earlier version of that speech was given in June of that year during a demonstration in Detroit of 125,000. Both actions had the support of the UAW.

Invoking the spirit of the 1963 Detroit and Washington marches, the UAW's King stated that "It's time for bold policies that transform this country and focus on everyday citizens — policies that result in jobs for all people in our society and investment in the future of our children by building factories, rebuilding roads, and reducing the economic hardship for millions of Americans. It's time to rebuild America with jobs, justice and peace." (www.uaw.org)

Social justice and concessions

Elected international president at the

union's June convention, Bob King has set himself apart from his predecessor, Ron Gettelfinger, by advancing a broad social justice agenda that includes support for immigrant rights, building international solidarity, opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and calling for the closure of the School of the Americas. King was heard chanting "Moratorium now!" at an anti-foreclosure demonstration outside Chase Bank in Detroit during the U.S. Social Forum in June.

Yet some grassroots activists in the union are less than enthusiastic about their new, attention-getting leader. Workers in the plants can't help but notice a contradiction: The UAW leadership seems to be pushing for justice and jobs everywhere but on the shop floor. The membership wants to resist concessions that threaten their standard of living — but they get no support at the top.

These contradictions came to a head in August as workers at GM's Indianapolis Metal Fabrication plant confronted International officials at their local union hall. GM has put their plant up for sale and the buyer, JD Norman Industries, wants to tear up the current contract and get workers to accept pay cuts up to 50 percent.

The International, behind the backs of the workers, negotiated a concessionary contract with JD Norman. Workers had voted to deny permission to any UAW official to negotiate an inferior agreement — an agreement that would undermine other locals in a practice known as "whipsawing."

On Aug. 15, after trying for five minutes to address the angry Local 23 member-

ship in Indianapolis, the International representatives rushed out of the hall and drove back to Michigan. Then the membership voted not to even schedule a vote on the contract changes.

For King to have any credibility with the rank-and-file as a champion of social justice, he will have to stop the back-door dealings with the bosses and support resistance to the corporate agenda, which is to drive down wages to Wal-Mart levels.

Concessions have the biggest impact on workers of color and women. At GM, Ford and Chrysler, a two-tier wage structure cuts the wages of new hires in production to \$14 an hour while leaving base wages for skilled trades workers intact. White males still dominate skilled trades while the majority women and people of color in the auto industry work the lines.

Fighting racism and fighting concessions should go hand in hand, and should in turn be linked with the fight for jobs. Unfortunately, some anti-concession activists have taken a narrow, single-issue approach.

Gary Walkowicz, who challenged Bob King in the election at the convention, campaigned on only four points: no concessions, no two-tier, fairness for retirees and complete membership authority over negotiations. No one could oppose that, but what about all of the other issues facing the working class?

The campaign took no stand against immigrant-bashing, police brutality or racist discrimination on the job, or even for the right of every worker to a job. How

Continued on page 10

BANGLADESH

Garment workers, students fight back

By Larry Hales

In recent weeks, Bangladeshi garment workers have been waging a militant struggle. Police have arrested more than 20 of their labor leaders. The police claim the arrests are for “violent” clashes in July by garment workers who were rallying for a living wage.

When tens of thousands of garment workers demonstrated in July in the capital city of Dakar, it is reported that police shot rubber bullets at them, used tear gas and batons, and created an atmosphere of terror. Those arrested were reported to have been tortured into giving false confessions and making false accusations against key labor leaders for allegedly instigating violence.

The workers and their allies rebelled in response to the police terror and the horrible working conditions in the garment industry.

There are more than 3 million garment workers in Bangladesh; more than 70 percent are women. The Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector is the largest industrial sector in the country, and it is steadily growing. The low-paid garment workers, who were making 1,662 taka (\$24) monthly, have been demanding a minimum wage increase to 5,000 taka (\$72) per month.

A government-appointed wage board had raised the wages to only 3,000 taka (\$43) per month, which won’t go into

effect until November. The minimum wage of \$24 per month, which had not been changed since 2006, was less than \$1 a day; the slated increase is less than \$2 a day.

The International Labor Rights Forum and the Clean Clothes Campaign said that the recent arrests “were part of a strategy by the government of Bangladesh to deal with recent riots among garment workers by scapegoating peaceful worker advocates rather than addressing the true underlying cause of such turmoil: the country’s abysmal working conditions.” Human Rights Watch stressed that the arrests are part of a campaign of intimidation.

The garment workers produce clothing for very large retail corporations, such as Wal-Mart, which sells items produced by the RMG. Wal-Mart is the world’s largest retailer with more than 2 million global workers. Forbes Global 2000, which ranks the top 2,000 companies, reports that Wal-Mart is the largest public corporation. Its 2009 revenue was \$405 billion.

Wal-Mart is known for both paying low wages and forcing down wages across entire industries. The company advertises itself as being “customer friendly” because it keeps its prices so low. Behind Wal-Mart’s commercials, showing elderly people brought out of retirement as store greeters, this viciously anti-union company forces workers to have open schedules. The corporation has closed stores

where the workers voted in unions. It has been sued for discrimination and for violating the American with Disabilities Act and more. Corporate officials have denied workers overtime pay, health care benefits and full-time work hours.

Wal-Mart saves its customers money by brutally exploiting its workforce, preventing them from living better, while the corporation owners make record profits.

In addition to all the workers at Wal-Mart there are the millions who are not seen and are part of the global supply chain. There are 60,000 supplier companies in the U.S., China, Singapore, Bangladesh, Mexico and other countries. Wal-Mart forces the suppliers to cut costs and sets the prices of items that influence whole industries.

RMG also provides clothing for H&M, a Swedish clothing corporation that has 2,000 stores in 37 countries. It is the fourth largest exporter of apparel and the second largest exporter of cotton T-shirts to Europe. (Daily Star)

Students fight tuition hikes

Students have also been waging tremendous struggles in Dhaka, and in Chittagong, the second largest city in Bangladesh.

On July 26, thousands of students in Dhaka protested a value-added tax of 4.5 percent on the tuition of private university students — who make up 23 percent of students there. (www.emancipating-education-for-all.org). When the police

began to attack students, they rebelled and blocked streets. Their valiant action pushed back and defeated the tuition tax.

On the same day, hundreds of students at Chittagong University protested tuition increases. The students announced a strike for the following day. The movement grew to thousands of demonstrators from many student associations. The actions have rallied people throughout Chittagong and this has become a movement of “students against a hike in tuition fees.” Students blocked streets for days on end and the university has been shut down at least until September.

The state brutally moved to quell the student uprising with police wielding batons and shields, and using tear gas and rubber bullets. Hundreds of students were injured and arrested. However, by beating back the student movement, the police repression only emboldened the students, who have vowed to continue fighting.

The action of students in Bangladesh, much like the student movement in Puerto Rico, has drawn support from around the world and has energized the student movement globally. Students in the U.S. are planning for the next National Day of Action to Defend Public Education, and the international student movement is planning a Global Wave of Action for Education with protests set to take place from October through November. Students have set up a Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/34c3zs2>. □

Time story exposed as lie

U.S. occupation increases violence against Afghan women

By Joyce Chediak

The Aug. 9 Time magazine featured a shocking cover photo: a portrait of an Afghan woman named Aisha whose nose had been cut off, allegedly by the Taliban, for resisting abusive in-laws. Time used this picture to build support for U.S. troops as a “last line of defense” that will not “abandon” Afghan women against an advancing Taliban.

None of this was true.

The Taliban did not mutilate this woman. She was maimed by other reactionary forces while the U.S. looked the other way. Far from protecting Afghan women, the U.S. occupation has resulted in increased violence against them, while the Pentagon protects a government filled with misogynists.

In a story entitled “Afghan Women Have Already Been Abandoned” (The

Nation, Aug. 12), Ann Jones, who knows the woman on Time’s cover, explained: “I heard Aisha’s story from her a few weeks before her face was displayed all over the world. She told me that her father-in-law caught up with her after she had run away, and he took a knife to her on his own; village elders later approved, but the Taliban didn’t figure at all into this account.”

The true story, in a small-circulation progressive publication, will be read by a few. But Time magazine is everywhere and its slick and dramatic cover, which exploits the terrible situation of an unfortunate Afghan woman to justify the U.S. occupation, has already been seen by millions around the world. This blatant lie by one of the most powerful magazines in the world is an example of how the biggest media have taken on the role of mouthpieces for Pentagon policies, abandoning any pretext of objective journalism.

Meanwhile, Aisha’s face was mutilated by reactionary forces during the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, making the U.S. government responsible. In fact, “as U.S. troops remain in the country and have dominated it for the past 10 years, violence against women in Afghanistan has been increasing — not decreasing,” according to the Afghan women’s organization RAWA.

U.S.-backed Karzai government filled with misogynists

The U.S. government has created a frenzy against Taliban mistreatment of women for its own reasons. Pentagon press releases do not point out, however, that the Karzai government, placed in office by U.S. tanks and maintained there by U.S. troops, is mostly made up of reactionary feudal forces with the same views toward women as the Taliban.

Feudal misogynists control Parliament,

the cabinet and the courts, according to Jones. Even Time admits that “Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, the minister of economy and leader of the ideologically conservative Hizb-i-Islami faction ... believes that women should not be allowed to leave the home unaccompanied by a male relative.” (Time, Aug. 9)

Some gains for women in Kabul had been reported since 2001, as opposed to women in the countryside, who face the dislocation, death, hunger, hardship and lack of social accountability caused by the U.S. bombings. But today even women in Kabul face a severe backlash.

Prominent women assassinated, threatened

According to Jones, “a series of assassinations of prominent women, beginning in 2005, have driven many women from work and public life. Women working in women’s organizations in Kabul regularly receive threatening letters and, recently, high-tech videos on their mobile phones showing women being raped.”

A bill was passed by Parliament last year authorizing husbands in Shiite families to withhold money and food from wives who refuse to provide sex. The bill limited inheritance and custody of children to women in case of divorce, and denied women freedom of movement without the permission of the families. This Shiite Personal Status Law was supported by President Karzai, who was put in office and has been kept there by U.S. troops.

In this atmosphere, many women parliamentarians fear bringing up issues like women’s rights for fear of retaliation, according to the U.N. Assistance Mission.

U.S. never helped Saudi women

To test the U.S. government’s “concern” for the women of Afghanistan, it is useful to examine Washington’s record on helping women in other Muslim countries. Take Saudi Arabia, for example.

The Saudi regime is a U.S. client. For more than 60 years, U.S. oil companies have reaped billions of dollars yearly from the extraction of cheap and plentiful Saudi oil. Washington so thoroughly dominates this country of 27 million people that it got the Saudi government to pay \$40 billion of the \$60 billion the U.S. spent on the first Gulf War in 1991.

Certainly there has been plenty of op-

portunity for Washington to help Saudi women. But it hasn’t done so. In Saudi Arabia, arranged child marriage is legal. If a woman files for and wins a divorce, she can keep her children only until the boys are 7 years old and the girls 9, and can receive maintenance payments from her husband for only three months. Women are not allowed to drive or travel without written permission from a male guardian. They cannot walk alone even in their own neighborhoods. They are discouraged from becoming lawyers or architects because they might come in contact with men.

The U.S. government has locked Saudi

Arabia into a feudal and misogynist social system while finding the most efficient and modern ways to extract its oil. In the words of Egyptian fighter for women’s rights, Nahwal al Sadawi, “In Saudi Arabia — one of the worst countries for women — fanatic fundamentalist Islamic groups are supported by U.S. troops.”

With this kind of record, is it any wonder that under U.S. occupation Afghan women must live in a feudal social system that regards them as chattel, even as they are bombarded by the latest in 21st century weapons?

— Joyce Chediak

Continued on page 9

IN IRAQ

Illegal occupation continues despite phony troop withdrawal

By Gene Clancy

“We won! It’s over — America!” A young man whoops and hollers in what could be a cry from the crowd at a sports game. In fact, it was the ill-judged, hubristic “victory” shout of a soldier rolling over the Kuwaiti border in his armored truck, as supposedly the last U.S. combat brigade left Iraq after seven grueling years.

The media and commentators alike have hailed the so-called U.S. withdrawal as the end of the U.S. war against Iraq. It is, however, no withdrawal — combat or otherwise — no matter how many times it is called that.

Some 50,000 U.S. troops will stay in Iraq, down from 96,000, ostensibly to play a supporting role and advise Iraqi forces. That is, however, 50,000 armed U.S. troops, backed up by major military hardware and artillery. They will operate in “self-defense” and could intervene in armed combat at the request of the puppet Iraqi government.

According to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the State Department will take on vastly increased responsibilities: The department is planning to more than double its private security guards, up to as many as 7,000, according to administration officials who disclosed new details of the plan. Defending five fortified compounds across Iraq, the security contractors will operate radar to warn of enemy rocket attacks, search for roadside bombs, fly reconnaissance drones and even staff quick reaction forces to aid civilians in distress, the officials said.

The size of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq will be increased to around 2,500 officials. Two new satellite offices, in Basra and Mosul, costing \$100 million each are to be established. (New York Times, Aug. 18)

All this is in addition to 170,000 private contractors being paid by the U.S. government, many of them military mercenaries, already operating in Iraq.

By 2011 all U.S. troops are to be withdrawn, according to a treaty with the puppet Iraqi government. This has led some veteran imperialist analysts to suggest that thousands of redeployed troops will be needed after 2011.

“We need strategic patience here,” Ryan C. Crocker, who served as ambas-

The anti-woman bill passed even though 25 percent of Parliament’s seats are reserved for women. How could this happen? M.P. Sabrina Saqib, who voted against the bill, “estimated that less than a dozen of the 68 female parliamentarians support women’s rights. The rest — proxies for conservative men who boost them into power — aren’t interested.” So some apparent gains for women in Afghanistan that the U.S. took credit for, like reserving a quarter of the legislative seats for women, were not real but done with smoke and mirrors.

The best way for the U.S. to “help” the women of Afghanistan is to get out of that country and the entire region, cease all overt and covert activity, stop interfering in the affairs of the Afghan people, and leave the women and men there to determine their own lives.

Next: Exposing the colonialist assumption that Western culture is superior regarding women. How the U.S. government ignores the epidemic of violence against women in the U.S.

sador in Iraq from 2007 until early 2009, said in a New York Times interview. “Our timetables are getting out ahead of Iraqi reality. We do have an Iraqi partner in this. ... But if they come to us later on this year requesting that we jointly relook at the post-2011 period, it is going to be in our strategic interest to be responsive.”

The accomplishments of ‘nation building’

The Barack Obama administration has so far been somewhat restrained in its comments about the so-called withdrawal, even though it was a major campaign promise during the last presidential election. As of Aug. 23, Obama has released only one written statement and made a one-sentence reference at a pair of fundraisers.

While some called it the end of the seven-year war, Obama sought to avoid the sort of “mission accomplished” moment that came to haunt George Bush after he prematurely declared a victory in Iraq on May 1, 2003, soon after the U.S. invasion. (New York Times, Aug. 22)

The administration’s dilemma raises the question of just what has been accomplished so far by a war which began as a “preemptive” strike against nonexistent weapons of mass destruction and morphed into an exercise in “nation build-

ing,” i.e., the creation of an imperialist-run neocolony.

Consider the children, who represent the future of the “new order” in Iraq. In December 2007, the Iraqi government reported that there were 5 million orphans in Iraq — almost half of the country’s children. Seventy percent of children are suffering from trauma-related symptoms, according to a study of 10,000 primary school students in the Shaab section of north Baghdad, conducted by the Iraqi Society of Psychiatrists and the World Health Organization.

“We’re now finding an elevation of mental health disorders in children — emotional, conduct, peer, attention deficit,” according to Iraqi psychiatrist Said al-Hashimi. “A number are even resulting in suicide.” (San Francisco Chronicle, March 19, 2007)

The independent monitoring group Iraq Body Count says as many as 106,000 civilians were killed. Another group, the ORB (Opinion Research Business), an independent British polling agency, suggests that the total Iraqi violent death toll due to the Iraq War since the U.S.-led invasion is in excess of 1.2 million. These statistics do not include the estimated 23,000 Iraqi freedom fighters who died defending their country from invasion and occupation.

Pentagon ‘dirty tricks’ can’t close can of worms

By Deirdre Griswold

A new generation of “Plumbers” seems to be at work, trying to discredit the leak of secret government war documents. Their first attempt has failed.

An arrest warrant on a rape charge filed in Sweden on Aug. 21 against Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, was withdrawn within hours. Karin Rosander, spokesperson for the national prosecutor’s office, told reporters that when the chief prosecutor, Eva Finne, reviewed the case, she found no reason to believe that Assange had committed rape.

The warrant, which was never served, was issued while Assange was in Sweden hoping “to establish a secure base for himself and WikiLeaks in Sweden because its press laws provide broad protections for news organizations that publish secret information.” (New York Times, Aug. 22)

Assange is quoted as telling a reporter shortly after the warrant was issued, “I do not know what lies behind this. But we have been warned that, for example, the Pentagon plans to use dirty tricks to undermine us.”

There is no question that Assange is in the Pentagon’s sights. On July 25, WikiLeaks published online a collection of 77,000 classified documents it calls “Afghan War Diary, 2004-2010.” Like the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 during the Vietnam War, this was a massive leak of information the government wants kept secret.

Back then, the “leaker” was Daniel Ellsberg, a Marine combat veteran who had served in Vietnam and became a theoretician of Cold War tactics and strategy for the Pentagon, attaining the highest civil service grade of GS-18, equivalent to a major general. He knew the war inside

out — and came to hate it and his role in it.

Ellsberg smuggled out and gave to the media copies of a 7,000-page secret Pentagon report that showed the public had been lied to about the war and concluded that it couldn’t be won. In retaliation, he was charged with treason. The Pentagon sent a covert squad it called “the Plumbers” to burgle Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office in the hope of getting dirt on him. But the robbery was discovered and the ploy boomeranged. It became one more proof that the government would try to destroy anyone who told the truth about that horrible war of imperialist aggression.

Fast forward to 2010. Congressperson Mike Rogers, a member of the Select Intelligence Committee and a former FBI special agent, said Aug. 3 on MSNBC that the U.S. should have executed Ellsberg for treason. His remarks were in the context of also calling for capital punishment in the case of Pvt. Bradley Manning, who is being held by the Pentagon on charges of having released secret documents on the Iraq War to WikiLeaks.

Manning, a 23-year-old Army intelligence analyst, is alleged to have leaked videos showing U.S. air strikes in Iraq that deliberately killed many civilians, including children and news journalists.

Opponents of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have for years been saying that both were launched on false pretenses. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and it had no connection to 9/11. The Taliban in Afghanistan also had nothing to do with 9/11, but by now the propaganda machine has branded all Muslim groups that oppose U.S. military occupation as cronies of al-Qaida.

What the WikiLeaks struggle shows is that people who have not been longtime opponents of the war machine but rather

Also not counted are the tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians abused by military sweeps of their neighborhoods, or those tortured, killed and raped in prisons such as Abu Ghraib by the CIA and private contractors. The Pentagon recently imprisoned a U.S. Army intelligence officer, Spc. Bradley Manning, and charged him with releasing graphic video evidence of a massacre of civilians from an attack helicopter in Iraq.

Despite billions of dollars poured into Iraq for “reconstruction,” not one measure of economic, education, public health or safety has reached the levels that existed before the U.S. invasion. This includes the electrical grid and oil production, which was the primary (although unspoken) reason for the invasion.

For these horrendous results, the Pentagon has sacrificed 4,463 American dead and over 33,000 wounded, many maimed for life. The day after “the withdrawal” a soldier was killed by a rocket attack in southern Iraq. Last year, the U.S. military reported the most suicides since they have been keeping records.

The progressive movement around the world must demand an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world. Bring the troops home now! □

have been part of it, people like Ellsberg, are now finding the courage to speak out. Ellsberg was a high-ranking civilian working for the Department of Defense when he leaked the Pentagon Papers. Manning is just a private. But today, because of the Internet, there are tens of thousands of soldiers at various levels who have access to at least some of the documents the government wants to hide.

Will the WikiLeaks exposures — and Assange says there are 15,000 more documents to be released soon — bring an end to these terrible wars? Not unless the progressive movements use them to mobilize public, visible opposition to the war.

It is not enough that those willing to search for the truth can now find it. It is not enough that an August Associated Press poll found that those supporting the war have dwindled to only 38 percent of the people.

The war machine represents a powerful concentration of U.S. imperialist interests — from the industries that do research, development and production of war materiel to the multibillion-dollar providers of mercenaries and to the energy corporations and the banks behind them. Even when they are losing a war, they have ample incentive to keep it going as long as they have willing troops to command, a compliant Congress to fund it and an administration yoked to the foreign policy ambitions of the military-industrial-banking complex.

Their resolve to keep troops in Iraq and Afghanistan must be broken by the militant struggle of the developing mass movements in this country against racism, xenophobia, poverty and unemployment.

Ending the wars is integral to the struggle for jobs and justice at home. □

FREE TROY DAVIS!

Whatever happened to the “presumption of innocence” that every child in this country gets told is a cornerstone of the U.S. judicial system?

A federal district judge in Savannah, Ga., ruled on Aug. 24 that Troy Davis had failed to prove his innocence, thus giving Georgia prison authorities the go-ahead to schedule his execution.

Failed to prove his innocence? But isn’t an accused presumed innocent unless evidence is put forward proving her/his guilt “beyond a reasonable doubt”? Certainly in Davis’s case, this didn’t happen. And there is a mountain of doubt.

He had gone to trial in 1991, when he was in his early twenties, accused of killing an off-duty Savannah, Ga., police officer in 1989. Convicted and put on Georgia’s death row, Davis eventually got civil liberties groups interested in his case. Finally, an appeal got as high as the Supreme Court, which ordered a new hearing.

At the evidentiary hearing this June, four people who had testified against Davis at the original trial admitted they had lied. Three said they had been coerced by police into identifying him as the killer. One, who was only 16 at the time of the murder, had been questioned by several police officers without his parents or other adults being present. Four more witnesses at the June hearing implicated another person as the killer. (Amnesty International, Aug. 24)

But this wasn’t enough for District Court Judge William T. Moore Jr., who ruled that, although “new evidence casts some additional, minimal doubt on his

conviction,” Davis hadn’t proved his innocence. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Aug. 24)

Evidently guilt is assumed when the accused is a young Black man, the person killed is a police officer and the trial takes place in Georgia. Then you have to prove your innocence “beyond a reasonable doubt.”

Larry Cox, executive director of Amnesty International USA, responded to the judge’s ruling: “The testimony that came to light demonstrates that doubt still exists, but the legal bar for proving innocence was set so high it was virtually insurmountable. It would be utterly unconscionable to proceed with this execution, plain and simple.”

Judge Moore’s ruling helps tighten the noose around many oppressed people held captive by the prison system. So many Black, Latino/a, Native, Middle Eastern and other oppressed peoples, as well as poor whites, get shoveled through the criminal “justice” system without adequate defense and then convicted by juries carefully chosen for their bias. Once this happens, all presumption of innocence is gone, according to the law itself. You can only get out if you can prove your innocence “beyond the shadow of a doubt” to a judge in a proceeding poisoned by the racist and classist assumptions that permeate this most unequal of countries.

Troy Davis, assisted by civil liberties groups and attorneys, will appeal this ruling. It’s up to the rest of us to shout his name at every opportunity and demand he get the justice he has been denied for half of his young life. ☐

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

Marilyn Buck: ¡Presente!

For nearly 30 long, tortuous years, Marilyn Buck was a political prisoner of the state; a captive in the federal prison system for her role in the liberation of former Black Panther Assata Shakur.

She wrote gripping lines of radical poetry, often about the lives and plights of her fellow imprisoned women, as well as of prisoners who were active in the Black freedom and nationalist movements.

For example, back in 2000 she wrote “Black August,” an excerpt of which follows:



*Would you hang on a cliff's edge
sword-sharp, slashing fingers
while jackboot screws stomp heels
on peeled-flesh bones
and laugh
“let go! die, damn you, die!”
could you hang on 20 years, 30 years?
20 years, 30 years and more
brave Black brothers buried
in US koncentration camps
they hang on
Black light shining in torture chambers
Ruchell, Yogi, Sundiata, Sekou,
Warren, Chip, Seth, Herman, Jalil,
and more and more they resist: Black August*

Marilyn wrote that poem in 2000. She was released in July 2010, and recently passed away from the ravages of cancer.

Marilyn Buck was imprisoned so long because of her support of the Black liberation movement, which made her a traitor, of sorts, to the white nation. Like John Brown, she fought to free the unfree. Her spirit of resistance never left her.

Marilyn was 62. ☐

French gov’t attacks immigrants

By G. Dunkel

The French government of Nicolas Sarkozy is attacking the country’s large and diverse immigrant and foreign communities, which it calls the sources of delinquency and crime, with expulsions and deportations, loss and denial of French citizenship, and new laws imprisoning parents for the crimes their children commit, as well as increased police violence. According to many French political analysts, the Sarkozy administration is using this approach to repair its public standing, which has been battered by the worldwide recession, growing unemployment and the anger of France’s combative unions.

Much of what the Sarkozy government is practicing in France has been proposed by the Tea Party in the United States. The Front National, a fascist party that has played a significant role in French politics since its founding in 1972, has also pushed for these measures.

President Sarkozy has openly expressed his admiration for the U.S., telling the Washington Post, “I don’t see why my country doesn’t take inspiration from its great ally.” (April 19, 2007) While it is questionable whether the Tea Party pays much attention to what is happening in France, it is very likely that the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), Sarkozy’s party, and the Front National are emboldened by the Tea Party and reactionary U.S. laws such as Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070.

The camps of the “traveling people,” mainly Roma, who have been singled out in the past week for deportation, are called “illegal encampments for illicit traffics and activities.” (www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/brice-hortefeux)

According to French television network TV5, there have been a few demonstrations by French “travelers” who were sharing camps with the Roma. Their campers and belongings were also trashed by the French cops.

The Roma that the French government is targeting are in large part Romanian and Bulgarian citizens. They have been allowed to go to France or any other EU country since 2007, when these two countries joined the EU. TV5 has made

a point of showing the one or two planes that leave France every afternoon, taking families back to unemployment and to houses that barely meet the definition of shacks. The Roma interviewed say they left “voluntarily,” taking \$350 in compensation, because otherwise the French cops would make things “hard.”

France is trying to present these deportations as voluntary because mass expulsions of EU citizens from one EU state to another are against EU rules. According to the French news weekly *Nouvel Observateur*, the EU Parliament has condemned France’s expulsions, saying they “risk stirring up racism and xenophobia in Europe.” (Aug. 20) This sentiment was shared by religious groups and most political parties not allied to the UMP. Only Italy, which expelled a number of Roma last year, has given France some diplomatic support.

The Council of Europe estimates that there are about 12 million Roma in Europe and they make up 5 percent of the population of some countries. They were a more significant part of Europe’s ethnic mix before the Nazis unleashed genocide against them in World War II.

African women attacked

Another struggle in France has centered on police brutality against African women at public housing units in Courneuve, a working-class suburb north of Paris. Authorities there had decided to tear down the units and carried out some evictions in early July. A group of women from the West African country of Ivory Coast rejected the move and set up a camp outside the building, supported by a group called Right to Housing (DAL in French).

On July 21, cops attacked the camp. DAL took video footage of the cops dragging women by their heels over the asphalt. In one horrific case a woman was dragged face down, while she attempted to protect the baby in her arms. (www.droitaulogement.org/Revue-de-Presse-du-DAL.html)

This video caused an uproar — while many called for investigations into police conduct, the UMP condemned the group for interfering with the cops doing their duty. ☐

OLOC denounces SB 1070,

The following excerpted resolutions were passed by Old Lesbians Organizing for Change at its national gathering, held July 14-18 in Cleveland.

Arizona’s SB 1070

OLOC is appalled at the brutal attack towards Latino communities in Arizona with the passage of SB 1070, recently

signed into law by Arizona’s Gov. Jan Brewer. This law makes it a crime for a person to be in the state without documentation proving their immigration status. The law also gives the police the right to use race as one factor in determining whether there’s a reason to ask for those papers, empowering police to request such proof when they’re enforcing local and state laws and even civil code. It also grants citizens the right to sue cops if they’re not doing the job.

Therefore OLOC stands in solidarity with the Latino immigrant communities in Arizona as they deal with the devastating effects of SB 1070. We join them in their organizing efforts for a better life. We believe that their enormous contributions to this nation have a strong precedent and should be acknowledged and honored. No more walls! No more racial profiling! No more detentions or deportations! Keep immigrant families united! Immigration reform now!

Racism, concessions & the future of UAW

Continued from page 7

can we win back anything if we have no allies among the workers and oppressed? How can we gain allies without showing solidarity?

Soldiers of Solidarity — which gave the workers in Indianapolis the boost they needed to stop the concessions train dead in its tracks — has sadly not promoted the Aug. 28 march because

Bob King is behind it.

The march, behind which a major union has thrown its resources, is urgently needed and should be supported for the many progressive demands it is raising linking workers and the community. The march could be the springboard to launch a broad movement that actively promotes solidarity and fights to raise the standard of living of all workers and oppressed people — one on a par with the united movement that won the right of Black families to live in a complex named for the great warrior Sojourner Truth.

Grevatt worked more than 22 years at Chrysler’s stamping plant in Twinsburg, Ohio, which recently closed, and is now a member of UAW Local 869 at the Warren Stamping Plant in Warren, Mich. E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org.

MONTREAL

Women activists unite to fight imperialism

By LeiLani Dowell
Montreal

Uniting under the theme, “Moving forward the militant global women’s movement in the 21st century,” more than 350 women from 32 countries participated in the Montreal International Women’s Conference, held Aug. 13-16. The conference resulted in the formation of an International Women’s Alliance. The IWA will hold its first assembly in 2011 to adopt a constitution of principles of unity and an action proposal.

Plenary discussions highlighted the effect of imperialism on women and building resistance. A number of women-oriented workshops were held, including ones on resisting forms of exploitation; health and reproductive rights; the issues facing sexual minority women; the impact of migration; fighting racism and genocide; struggles of the Indigenous; and socialism and national liberation. A vibrant cultural event was held the evening of Aug. 15, showcasing the serious talents of many of the conference participants.

While the greatest number of women conference participants came from oppressed countries, there were women who represented important class struggles inside the imperialist countries like the U.S. and Germany. Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment was instrumental in organizing a delegation of women from the U.S., including a group from the Women’s Fightback Network. The WFN delegation included representatives from the Million Worker March Movement; Picture the Homeless; Transport Workers Union Local 100; the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights; Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; and Workers World Party.

Along with the WFN, the other conveners of the MIWC were Women of Diverse Origins, Gabriela Philippines, Red Género y Economía México, the Asian Rural Women’s Network and the Action Network for Women’s Rights and Empowerment.

MWMM leader Brenda Stokely, a plenary and workshop speaker at the MIWC, told WW: “One of the most affirming experiences at this conference was that we must build genuine unity and solidarity among women of color, our natural allies — sisters from Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America — sisters whose lives are directly



Workers World Party's Monica Moorehead speaks on "National Liberation and Socialism" panel. Hear her talk at workers.tv.

impacted by imperialist wars of aggression or superexploitation. These women not only spoke in their own name about conditions they face daily, but they spoke about various strategies and tactics for resisting and fighting back against those conditions in rural areas and urban centers. So many experiences of women were reflected at this conference, which was an inspiration in terms of building an alliance against all forms of imperialism.

“There were a lot of young women activists and revolutionaries at the conference who asked thoughtful questions in terms of the various ways on how to wage the

struggle, but also on how to maintain your fortitude and optimism in the day-to-day task of building alliances with others.

“Those of us from the bowels of U. S. imperialism were able to expose the conditions of the millions being exploited and facing a legacy of genocide within the U.S. prison house of oppressed nations — Black, Indigenous, Chicano/a, Filipino, Puerto Rican, Alaskan and Hawaiian nations as well as the numerous oppressed minorities. We pledged our solidarity to liberate our own society from capitalism and stand shoulder to shoulder with sister warriors who are waging anti-imperialist and revo-

lutionary struggles around the world.

“By forming this International Women’s Alliance, we will be able to help change the character of the global women’s movement by giving a strong voice to working-class women, rural women and women of color in order to define their own action plans and tactics in the struggle against imperialism.”

For more information on the conference and updates on the newly formed International Women’s Alliance, visit miwc2010.wordpress.com.

The writer was a member of the WFN at the Montreal conference.

violence against women

OLOC will not hold gatherings in Arizona or any state with these laws.

Murders of African-American women in Cleveland

Whereas the 11 African-American women whose bodies were found in and around a home in October 2009 in a heavily populated neighborhood in Cleveland is a tragic example of violence toward women and African-American women in particular;

Whereas African-American women are murdered at three times the rate of white women, according to the most recent statistics;

Whereas women continue to be subjected to physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, up to and including murder, throughout the United States and around the world;

Whereas the ability of all women and girls to live free from fear and abuse is a fundamental human right;

Whereas significant increases in efforts

and awareness are still needed to reduce the epidemic of violence toward women and girls in the U.S. and to enable all relevant public agencies to handle such issues appropriately;

Therefore, OLOC recognizes the tragedy of the Imperial Avenue murders, extends condolences to the families of the women, and recognizes the loss to the community represented by the deaths of these 11 women;

OLOC supports efforts in the local jurisdictions, at national levels and in international bodies to put pressure on law enforcement agencies and judiciaries to use all the powers at their disposal to take actions to prevent the victimization of women and

OLOC defends the network of women’s support and healing organizations that the women’s liberation movement built over several decades and will be quick to defend these vital institutions against onslaughts waged in the name of economic crisis. □

Old Lesbian group fights racism, ageism

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Racism and ageism were themes for the keynote speakers at the Old Lesbians Organizing for Change national gathering here in July, and for the speakout sessions done in a format known as “fishbowls.” The 150 participants ranged in age from 59 to 87.

Women attended from all corners of the U.S., and there was a strong delegation from Australia. Workshops had participants develop organizing strategies for the top-priority issues. Ongoing discussions of racism will continue in several regions of the U.S.

Two significant resolutions were passed (see related article). One stated OLOC’s solidarity with immigrant communities facing the “devastating effects” of Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070 and pledged to boy-

cott Arizona and other states with similar laws in scheduling organizational events. The second memorialized 11 Black women murdered on Imperial Avenue in Cleveland and called for stepped-up efforts to stop the epidemic of violence against women and girls in the U.S. and worldwide.

Among the many participants who shared their talents in the evening entertainments was Alix Dobkin, an OLOC board member. Dobkin read from “My Red Blood,” her memoir of growing up communist and coming out during the women’s liberation movement.

Most of the participants had been activists for many decades and were builders of services such as rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters. One of the resolutions makes it clear that “we will be quick to defend these vital institutions against onslaughts waged in the name of the economic crisis.” □

WW PHOTOS: LEILANI DOWELL AND MONICA MOOREHEAD

Inundaciones en Pakistán no son ‘naturales’ El papel del militarismo de EEUU en el desastre

Por Sara Flounders

Ni siquiera en esta época de cambio climático global, el inmenso sufrimiento del pueblo paquistaní debido a las tremendas inundaciones no tenía por qué suceder. Una inversión en la infraestructura y un programa adecuado de respuesta ante emergencias podrían haber minimizado lo que se ha convertido en uno de los peores desastres mundiales. Pero décadas de intervención estadounidense para mantener en el poder regímenes militares corruptos y reaccionarios contra la voluntad del pueblo han dejado a este país como uno de los más pobres y menos desarrollados de la región.

15 de agosto — La Organización de Naciones Unidas hace una semana denominó las inundaciones en Pakistán como la mayor crisis humanitaria en la historia reciente, con más personas afectadas que por el tsunami del sudeste asiático y los recientes terremotos en Cachemira y Haití combinados.

Desde el cálculo de ese 9 de agosto, el número de personas afectadas se ha duplicado a más de 20 millones que han quedado sin hogar y completamente desamparadas.

Las inundaciones aumentarán en la próxima semana debido a que niveles récord de agua se mueven corriente abajo hacia los centros más poblados al sur de Pakistán.

El coordinador de asistencia de emergencias de la ONU, John Holmes, dijo que las cifras llegarían a 40 o 50 millones de personas que necesitarán ayuda inmediata, de una población de 170 millones de habitantes.

Millones de personas han quedado aisladas, sin acceso a agua potable, alimentación básica o albergue. Millones de personas buscan un terreno más alto o se trepan en los techos de los edificios o en las pequeñas colinas de las llanuras inundadas por los ríos Swat e Indo.

Las inundaciones cubren toda la tierra cultivada en Pakistán. Todos los principales cultivos se han perdido. El corazón de la agricultura, la fuente de alimentación de Pakistán, está destruido.

Las inundaciones han dejado sin luz y comunicación a muchas partes del país.

Aunque este año hubo lluvias récord del monzón, estas inundaciones masivas no son un desastre natural. Comentaristas airados en Pakistán lo están llamando “una catástrofe hecha por el hombre”.

Las inundaciones no son sólo un accidente de la naturaleza. Semanas antes, cuando fuertes lluvias inusualmente golpearon la parte alta del río Swat y los altiplanos en el norte a finales de julio, se pronosticaron advertencias nefastas sobre el alcance masivo de estas inundaciones. Fueron las lluvias más torrenciales en 35 años.

Meses antes habían sido pronosticadas inundaciones y fuertes lluvias monzónicas. Pero aún después de 10 días de que las inundaciones habían afectado a 5 millones de personas en una amplia zona del norte, después de que los medios de comunicación habían informado diariamente sobre familias que se aferraban a las ramas de los árboles, campos inundados y casas derrumbadas, ninguna organización gubernamental había comenzado a prepararse para atender emergencias o para evacuar grandes cantidades de personas.

Esto incluye al ejército paquistaní, la fuerza dominante en Pakistán.

Un terremoto, ya sea en Haití, China, Chile o Cachemira, por lo general golpea con muy poco aviso de antemano. La predicción de un tsunami después de un terremoto submarino da a la gente sólo un par de horas de advertencia. Puede ser que sólo haya una advertencia apenas unos días antes de que se esté gestando un huracán o un tifón de gran magnitud.

Pero el hecho de que los desbordamientos masivos inundarían extensas áreas bajas en Pakistán se sabía con suficiente anticipación. Sin embargo, los funcionarios paquistaníes no tomaron medidas para notificar a la población en peligro o para llevar equipos de emergencia a la región, desde barcos hasta puentes portátiles, agua potable, tiendas de campañas y medicamentos.

Todas las palabras de preocupación de las agencias humanitarias están empezando a ser enunciadas. Pero hasta ahora el importe de la ayuda para Pakistán proveniente de los EEUU, países de la OTAN y los organismos de las Naciones Unidas está entre los más pequeños en la historia de asistencias para víctimas de desastres.

Washington ha prometido \$55 millones para ayuda de emergencia y el uso de seis helicópteros. ¡Qué insulto! Sólo este año, el Congreso asignó al Pentágono más de 1.000 veces esta mísera cantidad para seguir combatiendo sus guerras en la región.

La asociación con EEUU

Las desastrosas inundaciones que han afectado amplias zonas de Pakistán son un ejemplo gráfico de cómo la desigual y dependiente relación de Pakistán con EEUU ha dejado al país atrasado, distorsionado, sin ninguna preparación para poder responder a las lluvias inusualmente intensas en un momento de cambio climático global.

La alianza con EEUU no ha sido de ninguna ayuda en la hora de mayor necesidad del país. Los corruptos funcionarios feudales y los militares aún más corruptos y represivos, todos mantenidos en el poder por enormes cantidades de ayuda militar estadounidense, han demostrado que son totalmente incapaces de por lo menos avisar a las millones de personas que estaban claramente en peligro o de movilizar el equipo de emergencia más básico.

Washington está más que dispuesto para vender a Pakistán aviones F-16, cientos de misiles tierra-aire y aviones de vigilancia. Esto es enormemente rentable para los contratistas militares estadounidenses pero Pakistán termina aumentando su deuda.

Mientras tanto, Pakistán carece del sistema de control de inundaciones más básico. Hay una falta total de fondos de inversión o ayuda internacional para el control de inundaciones. Un sistema básico de represas, embalses, cuencas de contención, terraplenes y diques podrían haber contenido el agua e impedir inundaciones incontroladas en la región vulnerable.

Los principales ríos en EEUU, Europa, Japón y ahora China tienen control de inundaciones bien organizado.

La falta de control de inundaciones en Pakistán ha destruido cientos de kilómetros de carreteras y líneas ferroviarias, puentes, escuelas, hospitales y generadores eléctricos. Más de 6.000 pueblos han sido arrasados. Pueblos y ahora incluso ciudades, están sumergidas.

Durante décadas, Washington ha dispuesto generosos fondos para Pakistán para la policía y las agencias de

inteligencia, pero los fondos para el desarrollo de infraestructura, educación, salud y otras necesidades sociales han sido ignorados. Pakistán tiene una deuda de \$40 mil millones, en gran parte por la maquinaria militar vendida por EEUU.

Según las cifras del Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF), incluso antes de la devastación por la inundación, un 30 por ciento de los/as niños/as paquistaníes sufrían de malnutrición crónica; sólo la mitad de los 19 millones de niños/as de edad escolar estaban matriculados/as en la escuela, y dos tercios de las mujeres son analfabetas.

Ha habido una fuerte presencia del ejército paquistaní en la región del Swat y en la Provincia de la Frontera del Noroeste donde las inundaciones comenzaron. Sin embargo, su papel se centró exclusivamente en una represión brutal, no en la ayuda de emergencia.

El verano pasado, bajo una enorme presión política de EEUU, el ejército de Pakistán lanzó campañas intensamente destructivas de contrainsurgencia contra los talibanes en el norte de Pakistán, Bajaur, el Valle del Swat y en Waziristán del Sur.

En el Valle del Swat, que tiene muchas ciudades, el ejército paquistaní enfrentó la resistencia de una población urbana de 4 millones de personas. Dos millones de refugiados se vieron obligados a huir de sus hogares durante las batallas. Millones corrieron para protegerse del intenso bombardeo, pero el gobierno no tenía planes de ayuda para estos desesperados refugiados de guerra.

Ninguno de los equipos pesados suplidos por EEUU en la región se utilizó para construir un puente o una represa. Sólo fueron utilizados para arrasar la región.

Las mismas organizaciones islámicas que han sido capaces de proporcionar ayuda de emergencia para los/as refugiados/as, tanto entonces como ahora durante la inundación, son las que EEUU y el ejército paquistaní están tratando de destruir.

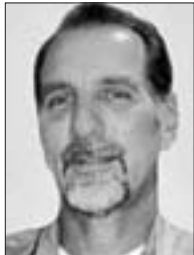
Mientras el agua rugía el 14 de agosto, aviones estadounidenses sin piloto atacaron de nuevo, matando al menos 13 personas en el distrito de Waziristán al norte de Pakistán, cerca de la frontera con Afganistán.

Las fuerzas de EEUU y de la OTAN tienen una abrumadora presencia en Afganistán, justo al otro lado de la frontera. Su tecnología es tan sofisticada que el Pentágono puede maniobrar un avión no tripulado desde el otro lado del planeta y hacer que lance un misil en Afganistán o en Pakistán.

Pero ni siquiera se requiere tecnología complicada para medir las precipitaciones o comunicar las amenazas climáticas a millones de personas. El equipo para hacer esto ha existido por décadas.

Sin embargo, esta simple tarea parece imposible porque EEUU, el más poderoso de los países explotadores capitalistas, subvierte gobiernos populares mientras promociona aquellos que colaboran con su sistema basado en la maximización de ganancias, donde la tecnología está al servicio de la opresión militar imperialista.

Para responder a las emergencias naturales y a las provocadas por el hombre, lo que se necesita es la destrucción de este sistema capitalista de explotación y opresión nacional para que cada país pueda establecer una planificación que satisfaga las necesidades de su pueblo. □



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez & Fernando González Llort.

¿Quiénes son los Cinco cubanos?

Los Cinco Cubanos están cumpliendo largas e injustas sentencias en prisiones de EEUU por defender a su patria – Cuba – de grupos terroristas del exilio Cubano en Miami. Los Cinco Cubanos fueron arrestados en 1998 por monitorear las actividades de esos grupos violentos e informar a Cuba sobre sus planes. Por casi 12 años, estos cinco hombres han permanecido en prisio-

nes de EEUU y como un castigo adicional, a dos de ellos se les ha negado el derecho humano básico de recibir visitas de sus esposas. Únase a personas de todas partes del mundo – parlamentarios, Premios Nobel, sindicalistas, activistas comunitarios – que se han pronunciado contra el injusto encarcelamiento de los Cinco Cubanos y continúan demandado su libertad. Para más información visite: www.thecuban5.org